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## Via Negativa

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VIA NEGATIVA

*O have you seen the devle with his mikerscope and  
scalpul a-lookin at a kidney with a slide cocked up.*

—from Jack the Ripper's "Openshaw Letter"

My work is the body; I love my work and I want to start again. In the hall of wonders, the terrible colonnade replicates daily: narwhal, shells from the Seven Seas, seven hundred paintings, an egg the Abbot found inside another egg, coconut, basilisk, whale's teeth, blue blood in a ginger beer bottle. It's said that in a week one can circumnavigate the whole structure, and indeed St. Euphrosyne is flying over us now, straddling a dowel three inches in diameter. She is heading for the college of mirrors, to the grid of dead where each person has three corpses. Here is Joan: she is in ecstasy; she is cutting through human; she is sitting and her flesh is falling off, all without leaving her cell. Is this so different from our native country, economy of bought drinks and dropped calls, economy of sexual dissonance? Admit it: not long ago, some women were so holy they bricked the women in. They were sick and had visions, honey, brass nights, teeth. Are you different from me? Drunk on terror, caught glance, dropped glass, glossy vitamin smell of spring? Another bit of innards: in the bindery the merchant memoirs shuffle into chronological order. I'm here because the skin is too small, I don't fit. They won't fix me just yet. And you are in the sacristy, wonder of manna fallen, foetus, bee. When will you quit separating bones from eggs? The life studies vary weekly—wall of hands, wall of hips. Are you ready to face the wall of the body? In the chancery, the marginal hydras mutter and smoke. The brother on the night-stair falling thinks, Curse it. Hold me so hard I feel my muscles striate.